

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 02125 131540Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 131330Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 6898

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2125

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS - 2

TAGS: PFOR, IN, UR, (DHAR, D.P.)

SUBJECT: INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW, D.P. DHAR

1. DURGA PRASAD DHAR RETURNED TO MOSCOW THIS WEEK TO TAKE UP HIS SECOND ASSIGNMENT AS INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE USSR. HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SERVED THERE FROM 1969 THROUGH 1971. THE 54 YEAR OLD POLITICAN CUM DIPLOMAT IS A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE. AT ONE TIME THIS EMBASSY RATED HIM THE CLOSEST TO A SERIOUS PRO-COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN MRS. GANDHI'S CABINET. WE ALSO FOUND HIM LACKING AS AN ECONOMIST AND UNINFORMED AS A PLANNER, LEADING US TO CONCLUDE AT ONE POINT THAT HIS PRINCIPAL GIFT WAS THE PURITY OF HIS IDEOLOGY. DHAR BRINGS HIS CABINET RANK TO HIS MOSCOW ASSIGNMENT. THIS MAY INDICATE MORE THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE GOI ATTACHES TO THE POSITION THAT TO DHAR'S OWN ACHIEVEMENTS IN NEW DELHI FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT HE WAS NONE TOO SUCCESSFUL AND THAT THE MOSCOW JOB MAY BE IN HIS CASE A KICK SIDEWAYS AT BEST.

2. SOURCES ON THE NEW DELHI SCENE TELL US THAT PRIME MINISTER GANDHI DECIDED LAST OCTOBER THAT DHAR SHOULD RETURN TO MOSCOW. DHAR RESISTED, PLEADING THAT HE HAD A WIDOWED MOTHER TO CARE FOR, AND THAT IN ANY EVENT HE COULD NOT DEPART UNTIL THE WINTER HAD PASSED. MRS. GANDHI INSISTED AND HINTED THAT DHAR COULD ALSO BE INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO CEMA, JUST AS INDIA HAS AN AMBASSADOR TO THE EEC. DHAR CONTINUED TO RESIST, BUT

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MRS. GANDHI CANVASSED SEVERAL EE AMBASSADORS AND RECEIVED

THEIR APPROVAL. DHAR RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO ACCEPT THE POST, BUT IN A LAST DITCH EFFORT SOUGHT TO GET A HIGH LEVEL CONGRESS PARTY JOB. BOTH MRS. GANDHI AND CONGRESS SECRETARY BAROOAH ADAMANTLY TURNED DOWN THIS BID. THEN FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH LEARNED OF THE CEMA PLANS. SINGH HAD HIS STAFF DO A PAPER MAKING THE POINT THAT INDIA SHOULD NOT HAVE AN AMBASSADOR TO CEMA SINCE IT WAS NOT A COLLECTION OF EQUAL STATES, BUT A SOVIET DOMINATED ORGANIZATION. MRS. GANDHI ACCEPTED THIS POSITION. WHEN THE DHAR APPOINTMENT WAS ANNOUNCED, THERE WAS NO MENTION OF DHAR'S ACCREDITATION TO CEMA. DHAR HIMSELF, ANGERED BY THIS, TELEPHONED A NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS AND TOLD THEM HE WOULD HAVE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO CEMA. STORIES ALONG THOSE LINES SUBSEQUENTLY APPEARED IN THE INDIAN PRESS.

3. WHEN DHAR RETURNED TO INDIA IN 1971 HIS STOCK WAS VERY HIGH WITH MRS. GANDHI. A MEMBER OF THE KASHMIRI BRAHMIN COTERIE TO WHICH THE PM OFTEN TURNED FOR ADVICE, HE WAS NAMED CHAIRMAN OF THE NEWLY CREATED POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, AND GIVEN THE TASK OF COORDINATING THE GOI'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE BANGLADESH CRISIS OF 1971. HE WAS ALSO REPUTED TO HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE INDO-PAKISTAN NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO THE SIMLA AGREEMENT. IN 1972 HE BECAME MINISTER OF PLANNING AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER HEADS. THIS PROVED A DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENT AND HE FAILED TO LIVE UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF MRS. GANDHI IN PROVIDING DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HIS NATIONALIZATION OF THE FOODGRAINS WHOLESALE TRADE WAS PERHAPS HIS MOST GLARING FAILURE.

4. DESPITE HIS UPPER CLASS, BACK-GROUND, DHAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONGRESS "LEFT". DHAR IS MARRIED. HE HAS ONE SON. EARLIER INFORMATION IN OUR FILES INDICATES HE WAS AT ONE TIME A HEADY DRINKER.
SCHNEIDER

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